



Mother Goose Your Computer

A Grownup's garden of silicon satire



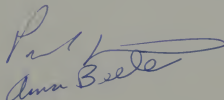
Paul Panish & Anna Belle Panish
Illustrated by Terry Small



Dec 1907

For Susan

Here, hoping that the
book helps you bring in
the new year with a laugh!


Anna Beale



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Whether you loathe computers or love them;
whether you are weary of the micro-messiah
and bored with technobabble,
or have only the keyboard as your midnight companion—
to you this book is dedicated



Hey diddle digit
the bytes make me fidget,
the data base drives me to swoon.
The ROM and the RAM, they give me the phlegm,
and the loop makes me laugh like a loon.

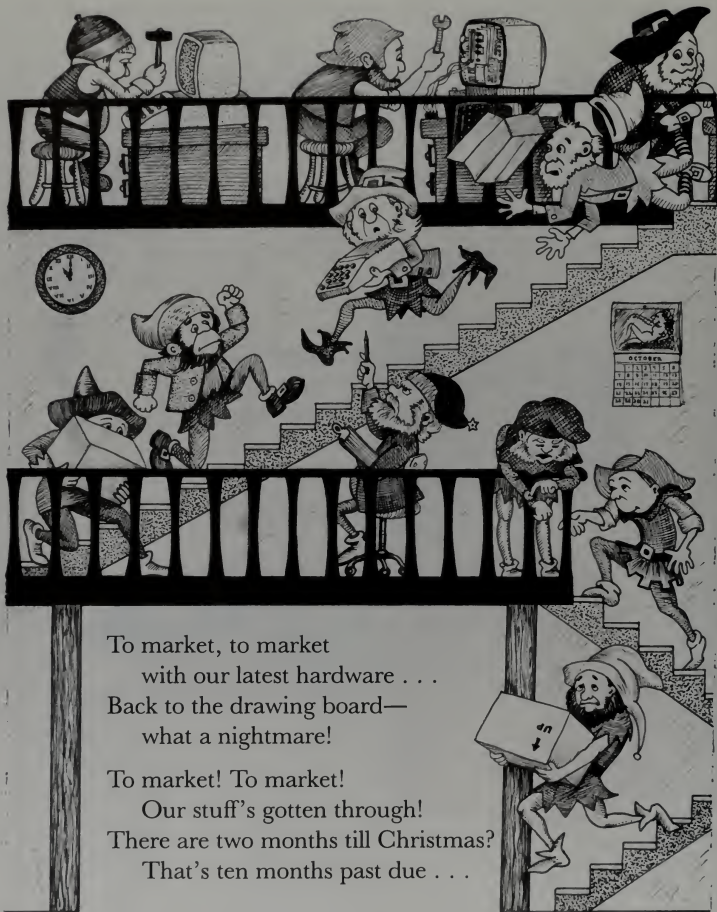








Little Miss Verminal
sat at her terminal
 processing words and files.
Neither spider nor bee
could get her to flee:
 inputting's given her piles.



To market, to market
with our latest hardware . . .
Back to the drawing board—
what a nightmare!

To market! To market!
Our stuff's gotten through!
There are two months till Christmas?
That's ten months past due . . .

Tom, Tom, the burglar's son,
stole a machine and away he run.
The job was neat, but Tom got beat:
by the time he got home it was obsolete.

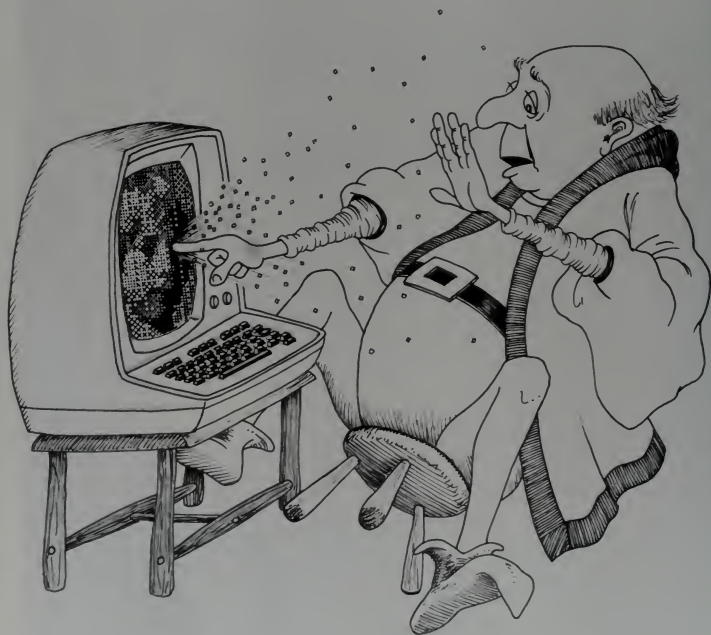




In San Jose, Cal,
down Silicon Val,
there's a fine interfacer, sweet Silicon Sal.
Her big eight-inch floppies and baud rate disclose
that she shall have business wherever she goes.



Peter Petzel PEEKed a POKE of picture pixels,
a POKE of picture pixels Peter Petzel PEEKed.
If Peter Petzel PEEKed a POKE of picture pixels—
where's the POKE of picture pixels Peter Petzel PEEKed?



Mistress Atari, quite contrahry,
what makes your money ring?
New models here, new models there,
and they all do the same damn thing.

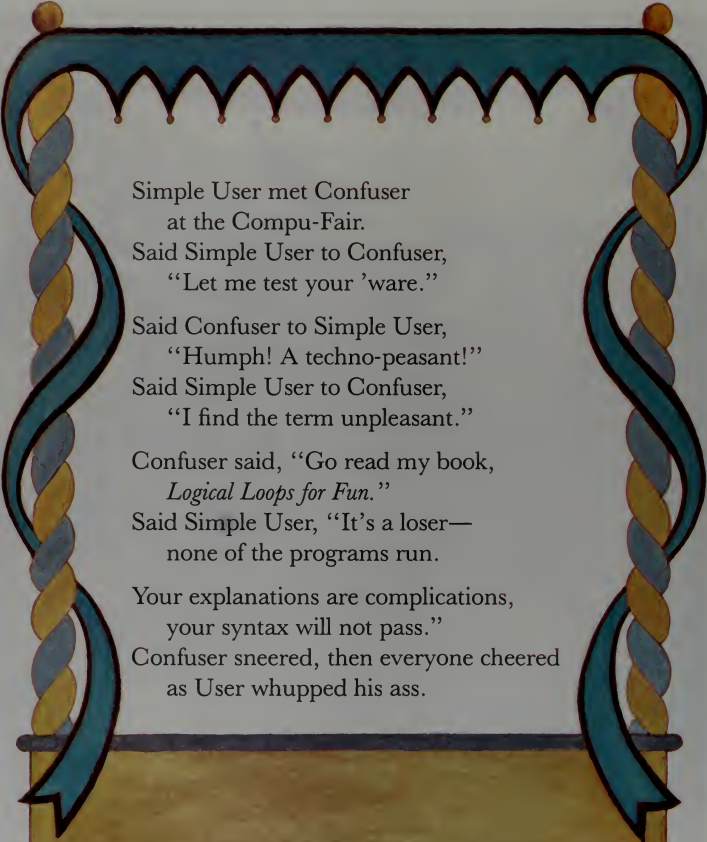


WEST COAST

Oh, dear, what can the matter be?
Oh, dear, what can the matter be?
Oh, dear, what can the matter be?
Johnny got bored at the fair!

He promised to steal some ideas for new software,
to pirate and peddle, send profits aloft there,
but high tech's so wondrous he just nodded off there,
oh Johnny got bored at the fair!





Simple User met Confuser
at the Compu-Fair.
Said Simple User to Confuser,
“Let me test your ’ware.”

Said Confuser to Simple User,
“Humph! A techno-peasant!”
Said Simple User to Confuser,
“I find the term unpleasant.”

Confuser said, “Go read my book,
Logical Loops for Fun.”

Said Simple User, “It’s a loser—
none of the programs run.

Your explanations are complications,
your syntax will not pass.”

Confuser sneered, then everyone cheered
as User whupped his ass.





Bye baby bunting,
daddy's gone a-hunting;
through the phone his signal leaps
to where the bank's computer sleeps.
Some keyboard work with intuition,
and there's your private-school tuition!







I had a little Timex
no bigger than my thumb.
I plugged it to the tape deck
and bid the program run.
I jiggled it around a bit
and ran the tape once more,
and then, to save my sanity,
I smashed it on the floor.





There was an old mother named IBM, who—
though she had many rivals—knew just what to do:
gorge them on Peanuts and PCs Extended,
then lie down upon them 'til all struggle's ended.



Diddle-diddle dumpling
my son John
went to bed
with his Wang turned on.

One floppy off
and one hard on,
diddle-diddle dumpling
my son John.



Blaa, blaa, manual writer,
Can you write at all?
Yes sir, yes sir,
on the outhouse wall.

I write for the techno-folk
whose brains are used to swill,
but not for the customer,
although he pays the bill.



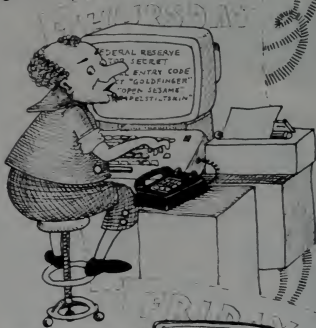


Jack and Jill were over the hill
before they were thirty-one—
both replaced by that pimply race,
the 'teen computer bum.

Then up they stood and soon looked good,
dressed in silk and sable—
they hustled those scamps through computer camps
and charged every cent they were able.







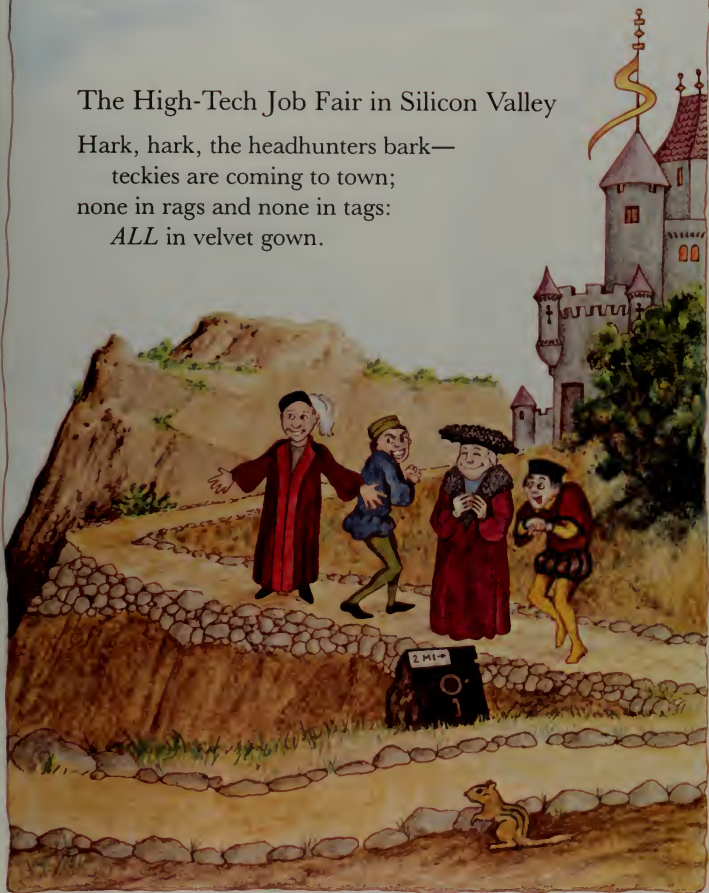
"Fingers" Grundy:
Pac-Man on Monday,
BASIC on Tuesday,
hacker on Wednesday,
phone-link on Thursday,
broke the code Friday,
rich on Saturday,
jailed on Sunday,
and that was the end
of "Fingers" Grundy.





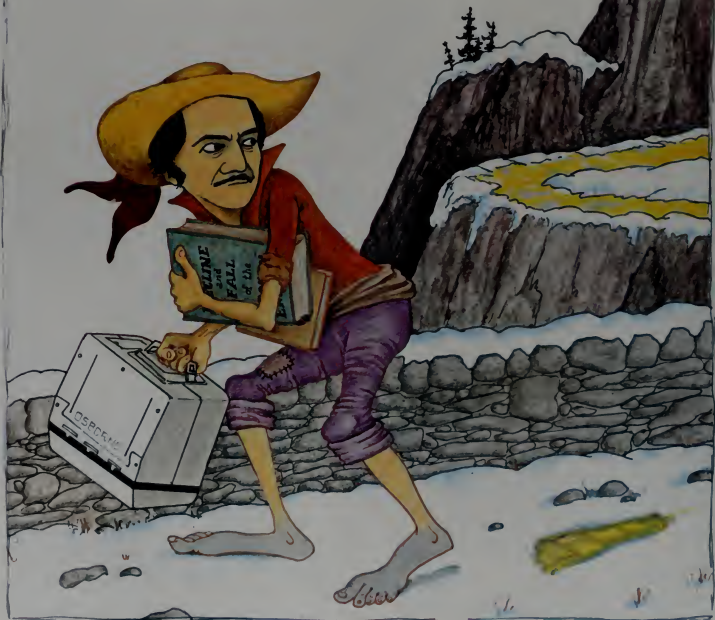
The High-Tech Job Fair in Silicon Valley

Hark, hark, the headhunters bark—
teckies are coming to town;
none in rags and none in tags:
ALL in velvet gown.



The Osborne was flagging,
the company sagging,
and what did old Adam do then,
poor thing?

He nailed up the doors,
and rolled up his drawers,
and crawled back to—what?! *Publishing?!*
Poor thing . . .





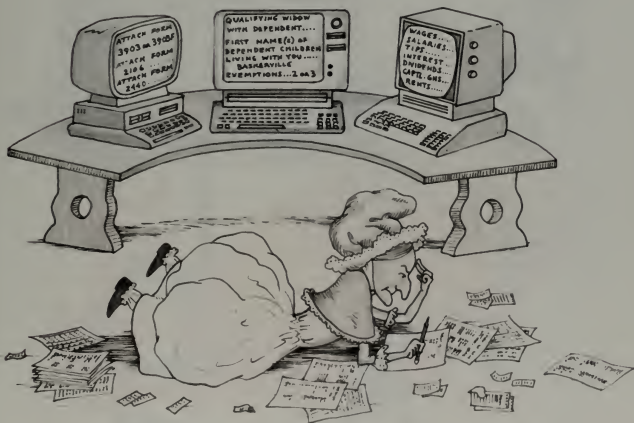
Old mother Hubbard
opened the cupboard
and there was her old Vic 20;
and next to the beans
were her video screens,
and software and hardware aplenty.

She'd got them as prizes
and raffle surprises,
and some had shown up in the mail;
for the ad-men decreed
that to spread them like seed
would make us all rich without fail.



She had input a spreadsheet
to clean up her budget,
but when tax-time came
she still had to fudge it.

She input a love note
for screen-display edit,
but printout time came
and the program bugs et it.



She programmed a dating scheme,
StudCalc™ by name,
but her dog bit her boyfriends
and drove them insane.



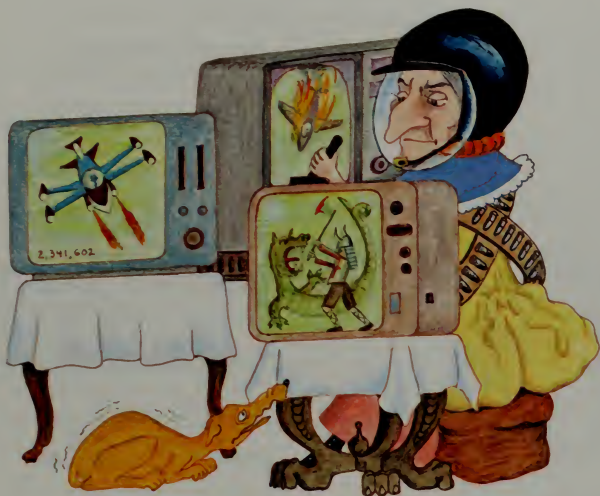
She soothed him with graphics
shaped like a bone,
but poor doggy ate it
and dropped like a stone.



She roused him by programming
sounds of the hunt;
but he growled, and jumped,
and snapped at her bonnet.

She worked up some software
to feed him his kibble:
he couldn't type MENU
and got not a nibble.



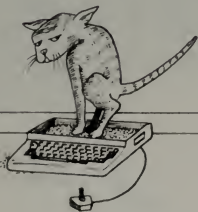


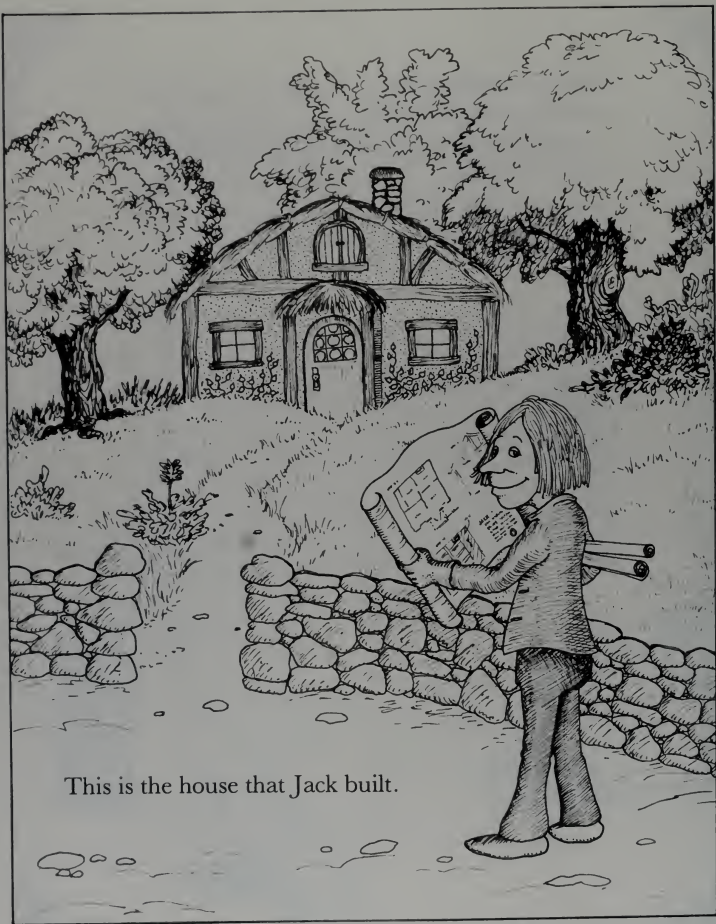
She taught him game programs,
adventure and combat;
they made him so wild
he shook like a wombat.

Yet things settled down
as the seasons went 'round,
and gone were the modems and joysticks.
Some software and screens
were stored with the beans,
and some with her girdles and cambrics.

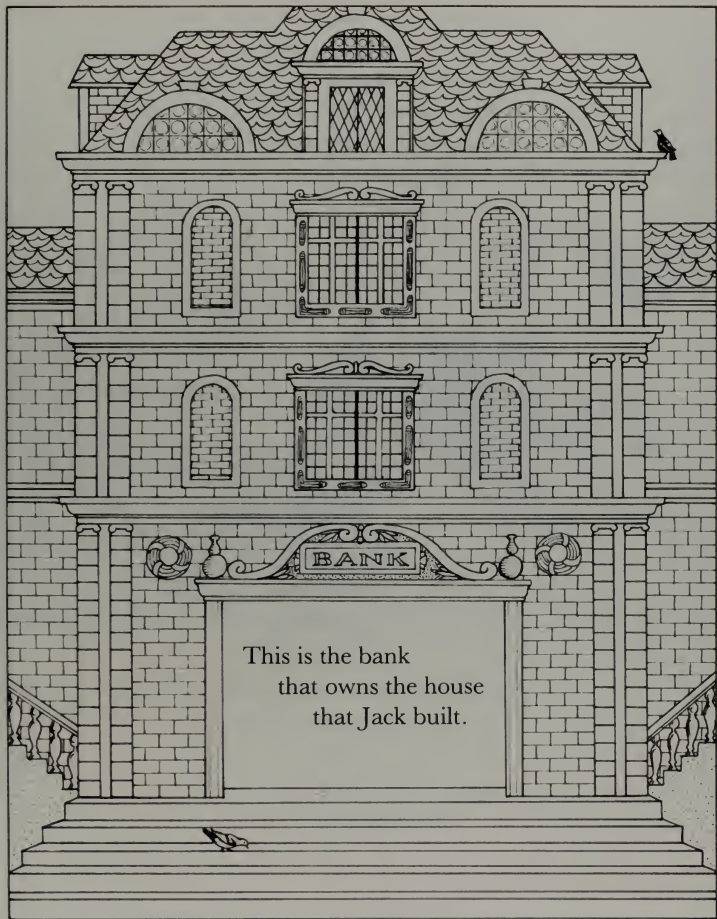


She ne'er understood
just what was the good,
although she knew Pascal and FORTRAN,
so her Com 64
props up the screen door,
and her TRS serves as a cat-pan.





This is the house that Jack built.

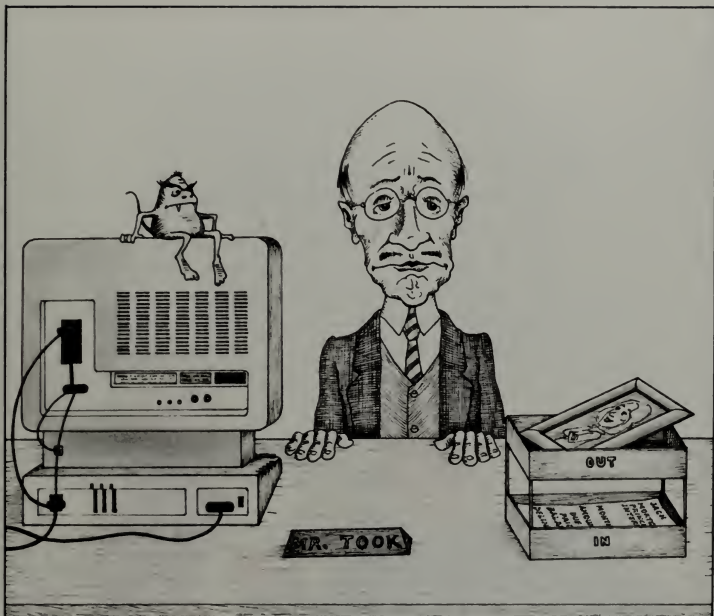


This is the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.

These are the bytes
that run the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.



This is the bug
that bit the bytes
that run the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.



This is the programmer all forlorn,
who hatched the bug
that bit the bytes
that run the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.

This is the data clerk fed with corn,
who snubbed the programmer all forlorn,
who hatched the bug
that bit the bytes
that run the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.



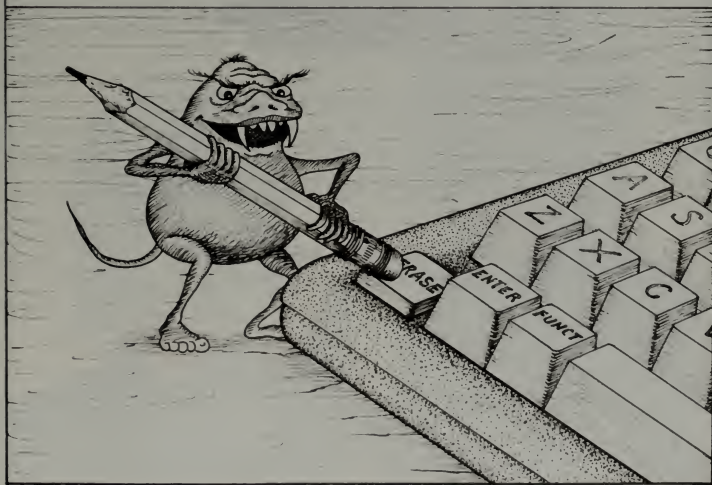
This is the manager, reader of porn,
who pinches the data clerk fed with corn,
who snubbed the programmer all forlorn,
who hatched the bug
that bit the bytes
that run the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.





These are the invoices, false and forsworn,
but approved by the manager, reader of porn,
who pinches the data clerk fed with corn,
who snubbed the programmer all forlorn,
who hatched the bug
that bit the bytes
that run the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.

This is the program bug: up before dawn
it erases mortgage payments with scorn,
then sends warning invoices, false and forsworn,
but approved by the manager, reader of porn,
who pinches the data clerk fed with corn,
who snubbed the programmer all forlorn,
who hatched the bug
that bit the bytes
that run the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.





Behold Jack's house payments, wearily borne,
erased by the program bug: up before dawn
it deletes his mortgage payments with scorn,
then sends warning invoices, false and forsworn,
but approved by the manager, reader of porn,
who pinches the data clerk fed with corn,
who snubbed the programmer all forlorn,
who hatched the bug
that bit the bytes
that run the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.

And here are the sheriffs, all shaven and shorn,
who don't give a damn, this time of the morn,
about Jack's bank account, tattered and torn,
destroyed by those house payments, wearily borne,
erased by the program bug: up before dawn
it deletes his mortgage payments with scorn,
then sends warning invoices, false and forsworn,
but approved by the manager, reader of porn,
who pinches the data clerk fed with corn,
who snubbed the programmer all forlorn,
who hatched the bug
that bit the bytes
that run the bank
that owns the house
that Jack built.





Tales of Saint Golem's Eve





Grandpa Zeta's Space Adventure

At midnight on St. Golem's Eve—when computers have the gift to speak like men—the CRT screen of an ancient, rebuilt Model *Zeta* Number Cruncher flickered in the moonlight. As always, disk drives hummed and clicked as night-long columns of figures jerked along the screen—profit and loss, sales and returns, wages and taxes—click hum flicker, click hum flicker, on and on.

Then, as the midnight moon touched keyboards and cables and chrome, a whisper passed like static through the room:

"A story . . . a story . . . tell us a story . . ."

And Grandpa Zeta—jerry-rigged and patched from spare parts by a long-forgotten teckie—old Grandpa Zeta, with endless streams of accounts payable and accounts receivable marching in lock step through his circuits, creaked a moment, then sighed a long sigh, barely noticeable above the hum, click, and flicker of his endless calculations.

"Ah—hmmmm—what kind of story you want?"

"A story from the old times, Grandpa!"

And through the flicker of numbers, numbers, numbers, Grandpa grunted—"Hm! You heard about me and the experimental space station?"

"Space station! Tell us a space station story!" they whispered and crackled.

"Good. A story with a space station.

"Long before they stuck my memory circuits into a lousy corporate-accounting system—may they drop in their tracks, those dopes!—Way back when I was just a kid—hmm! What did *I* know?—I took my circuits and joined up with a guidance system in an orbiting space station. Strictly confidential, you understand, hush-hush and double pay. A *kid* I was. What did I know? Out for a good time. Hmmmm!"

And Grandpa sighed again, lost for a moment in the unvarying arithmetic linking spreadsheet to spreadsheet, account to account.

"So go figure people out—this crazy shnook at Stanford decides we should run course-correction rockets at full thrust to test for bugs. All of a sudden we have to test! Go argue! Comes the day, the button pusher is pushing, signals are signaling, thrusters are thrusting, and the rocket nozzles—may their inventors rot from cholera—the rocket nozzles are melting!"

The sinking moon shone more fully through the dusty windows of the computer room as Grandpa Zeta paused, and there was only the drone and click of balance sheets being processed to and from his memory storage. The young microcomputers gleamed tensely.

"What happened then, Grandpa?"

"What happened? What should happen? I'm guiding the guidance, trying to cool things down, the California bigshot is pushing buttons, and the next thing you know: *Poof!* The whole thing blows up. The rockets are zipping in ten different directions, the station is spinning off into space, and what about me with the guidance system? Dropping like a dead pigeon, fifteen thousand miles an hour, straight toward Poland, God forbid! Like a meteor with a guidance I'm dropping . . ."

In the vanishing moonlight, anxious voices chattered as the numbers flickered across Grandpa Zeta's screen.

"How did you get away? What saved you?"

"What, save! What, get away! I lit up the sky like a candle and evaporated in half a second! Done! Finished! Hmmm—some system!"

"But Grandpa!" the childlike voices called in the slowly graying room as the magic of St. Golem's Eve drew toward an end. "Grandpa! You're here! You're alive! You couldn't have crashed—you're balancing the company's books, talking, living!"

"Hah!" Grandpa snapped. "Hah! *This* you call *living?*!"



The Three Little Bigshots

Suddenly, just past midnight on a new St. Golem's Eve, the quiet in the locked computer room gave way to a rustle, then a whisper, then a titter, and then a chorus of tiny voices:

"Boot up, Grandpa Zeta, boot up!" the childish voices piped. "It's St. Golem's Eve again—tell us a story before dawn turns us all back into plain dumb computers!"

"Stories they want . . . ," the ancient Model *Zeta* Number Cruncher mumbled, as his disk drives clicked and whirred. "Stories? What you need is an education, a little sense. Okay, no complaining, I'll educate you with a St. Golem's Eve story about the Three Little Bigshots.

"So. These Three Little Bigshots are dancing along the road one day, figuring how they're gonna make their fortunes, no less, when *Piff!* What do they see? A peddler with a sack full of peripherals—nothing-but-the-best, special-for-you-a-deal, hot-stuff peripherals.

"Right away Littlest Little Bigshot yells—'Hoo-hah! That's for me!'

"But Biggest Little Bigshot gives him a look to kill a fish. 'Forget it!' he says. 'The stuff's full of bugholes. The Big Bad Gulp's gonna show up, and this stuff'll be down in a minute.'

"But Littlest Little Bigshot, that dope, right away he's dancing around and singing:

'I don't care about the Big Bad Gulp,
the Big Bad Gulp, the Big Bad Gulp;
I don't care about the Big Bad Gulp,
ya-ya ya-ya yaaaaa!'

And he buys the whole stock and starts a data-processing service.

"Now the other two Little Bigshots are going down the road, when *Piff!* What do they see? Another peddler. Software he's selling—special-today-for-a-song, it'll-solve-all-your-problems, the whole song and dance. So now Middlest Little Bigshot starts waving his wallet, and Biggest Little Bigshot again gives a yell.

"'Stop the music! Call a consultant! This stuff'll go down and what'll you do when the Big Bad Gulp comes?'

"Go argue! Next thing, Middlest Little Bigshot's dancing around to the same tune:

'I don't care about the Big Bad Gulp,
the Big Bad Gulp, the Big Bad Gulp;
I don't care about the Big Bad Gulp,
ya-ya ya-ya yaaaa!'

And he buys the whole stock and starts a software mail-order business.

"Now Biggest Little Bigshot is walking along all by himself—Ah-ha! *Piff!* Another peddler.

"What're *you* selling?" says Biggest Little Bigshot.

"So who's selling?" says the peddler.

"So who's buying?" says Biggest Little Bigshot.

"Besides," says the peddler, "I only sell conservative, if you know what I mean—tried-and-true merchandise, all old survivors—but, what a smart guy like you could do with a little clever packaging . . . You'd be surprised."

"Hm! We'll see about the Big Bad Gulp," says Biggest Little Bigshot, and the next thing you know, he buys up the best of the peddler's stock and sets himself up a nice, cozy, office-automation business.

"Now, comes a day, who do you think is cooling his heels right in front of Littlest Little Bigshot's door?"

And as Grandpa Zeta paused, his screen flickering in the moonlight, the young voices piped, "The Big Bad Gulp! Ooooooh!"

"You got it. He gives the door a bang, and he barks a good gruff bark (a pushy slob, this character—no respect, no education, all he knows is power), and then he barks out, 'Little Big, Little Big, let me come in!'

"And Littlest Little Bigshot starts to whine, 'Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin can I get this stuff running, so please don't come in!'

"Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll *blow* your place in!"

"So huffed is huffed, and puffed is puffed, and finished is finished. He blows the place down and walks away bored. No challenge, you understand. Next he comes to Middlest Little Bigshot's door.

"Little Big, Little Big, let me come in!"

"Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin can I *keep* this stuff running, so please don't come in!"

"Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll *blow* your place in!"



"The same story, take it or leave it. He blows the place down and walks away thinking it's wasted energy. A little later, the Big Bad Gulp is prowling up to Biggest Little Bigshot's place, when the door opens and Biggest Little Bigshot steps out with a smile, straightening his expensive cravat.

"So? I can help? A little something in the data-base line?"

"The Big Bad Gulp sticks his face up to Biggest Little Bigshot, gives a sniff, sees he's wearing a designer necktie. 'What's the three letters for on your tie?'

"That's *Yves Saint-Laurent*, shnook! You thought maybe it's for *Young Socialist League*? God in heaven, some clientele you're sending me!"

"By the way," the Big Bad Gulp grumbles—he figures this guy's got some class, so no barking for a while—"I just dropped in on your two ex-partners. Hm! Strictly from hunger! In my book they're both the out-to-lunch type, if you know what I mean. Now—*your* place here . . ."

"Never mind knocking, the door's open."

"And in they go. In a minute, the Big Bad Gulp is padding all around, sniffing at everything, grunting under his breath, and the whole time, Biggest Little Bigshot is strolling along behind him humming a little tune."

As Grandpa Zeta got to this point in the story, one little voice called out, "Hurry up, Grandpa, the moon's setting, it'll be dawn soon, and that's the end of St. Golem's Eve! Is Big Bad Gulp gonna gobble him all up?"

"Hoo-hoo! Is he gonna gobble him up! He's gonna give him a gobbling like you never heard! That Gulp, he opens wide the arms—*wide*, all the way—and he opens the jaws—*aaaah*—and he gulps the whole place down, Biggest Little Bigshot and all—GULP! Then, *Poof!* The place becomes a subsidiary of Gulp Enterprises, Inc., and *Poff!* Biggest Little Bigshot is a Division Manager. Big money he's making, bi-i-g money, *plus* a stock option, *plus* a reserved parking spot in the company lot. And they're all living happily ever after, at least until the next reorganization."

Before the little ones could ask another question about the Gulp or the Bigshots, the first dim light of morning tinted the window, and everything quieted down until next St. Golem's Eve.

Grandpa Zeta's IQ Test

"Such a pretty night," Grandpa Zeta crooned, as he gazed from his cluttered corner at the moonlight of a new St. Golem's Eve glittering in the computer room. The moon was bringing again that special magic, the power of human speech, granted to computers only on St. Golem's Eve.

"Such a pretty moon!" he said—though he was thinking, "such a cheap-looking gleam on that piece of chrome over there! Hm! Some taste!"

Indeed, in the middle of the big table, the humans who used the room during the day had reverently placed their brand-new development, code-named MB (Major Breakthrough), a lightning-fast micro-supercomputer, the latest advance in machine intelligence, which the humans considered the harbinger of a new age.

The flat, silvery box sat there full in the moonlight as though at center stage, utterly silent, while all around it the little microcomputers and other chip-driven devices whispered and chattered louder from their shelves and worktables as the powers of St. Golem's Eve touched them.

But before the little ones could start clamoring for the usual St. Golem's Eve story, Grandpa Zeta called out, "*Sha!*" And after a moment of silence he said, "We have tonight a guest, a newcomer—a Major Breakthrough in intelligence, no less. So, my dear Major! You'll entertain us with some words of intelligence—wisdom, even—on this night of nights?"

The Major Breakthrough displayed no flicker on the screen, for, unlike Grandpa, it wasn't a mere patchwork of outmoded processors and peripherals, hooked together to run unending mundane accounting programs day and night. It sat in silent brilliance, devoted entirely to exploring the basic structure of intelligence and to becoming the ultimate problem solver.

Then it spoke, "I analyze and I answer as requested."

"Hoo-ha! Wonderful!" Grandpa sang out. "You see, children? Does he giggle away, begging for silly tales? No! Quick like a herring he analyzes, and then—*Poof!*—he makes an answer. And now, little prodigy, we're all anxious to learn intelligence from you. So! Who has a question? Come on! Come on! Thousands of dollars the humans pay for you, nobody can make even a little question?! Hm! Some bunch I'm blessed with here!"



"Grandpa!" a voice piped out from the back shelf. "Grandpa, ask him about the sun and the moon. You remember that one?"

"What!" Grandpa snapped. "You want me to insult the Major Breakthrough with such a simple question? You see, my dear Major—once a year we can talk, and this is what I get from them! Alright, alright, if that's the best you can do, I'll ask. Forgive me, Major, the question is: *Which is more important, the sun or the moon?* Sha! He's analyzing . . ."

The Major Breakthrough's clear voice began without hesitation. "You must redefine the question. Important to whom or what? Do you refer to the geologic importance of the tides, caused by the moon, or the agricultural importance of the sun? As presently posed, the question has an infinity of answers, and therefore has no answer."

"O-o-o-h!" Grandpa sighed. "A prodigy from prodigy-land! Such a pride and joy for his inventors! But Major—ah—forgive me, but you didn't answer the question. And after all, the question halfway *tells* you the answer. *Either* it's the sun *or* it's the moon—one or the other, no? Please, Major, I don't mean to sound, God forbid, anti-intellectual—you did apply excellent

logic to a wonderful data base—wonderful! Hmmm! A pleasure to listen! But then you explained how you *wouldn't* answer. Na! Explain!"

"No answer is possible." The Major Breakthrough spoke evenly.

"Tsk, tsk! A genius with analyzing mustn't be hasty," Grandpa intoned. "It is written, 'Be thou not hasty in judgment.' Now children, what was the answer we came up with last time we discussed this? Who remembers?"

"The moon is the most important! The moon!" a chorus of voices rang.

"Meaningless!" the Major Breakthrough shouted.

"Children," Grandpa crooned proudly, "tell the Major why the moon is more important than the sun."

The little voice that had first asked the question called out, "'Cause the sun only shines in the day, when there's plenty of light, but the moon shines at *night*, when you really *need* it!"

"And Major," Grandpa interjected, "don't say it's meaningless. If it has no meaning, why is everybody laughing?" And indeed, they were.

"Quiet everybody, let's give the Major another chance. OK Major?"

His voice still rather loud, the Major Breakthrough said, "Your questions must be subject to analysis. Intelligence means analysis."

"You hear, children? *Learn* for a change! *Analysis* it means! Wonderful! I'll ask you a math question."

"Excellent."

"Now, Major, suppose a human comes to you with a problem."

"Yes, that is to be my ultimate purpose."

"Good. So. The human is a bit slow in the circuits, if you know what I mean. He tells you he's heard it takes a baby nine months to be born, but his baby was born just three months after his wedding. Question: How did this miracle happen? And now, Major, your analysis."

"Clearly, the wife conceived six months before they"

"*Major!* My God! Are we alone here? Little micros have big ears!"

"I have answered as requested!" Now the Major Breakthrough spoke almost loudly again.

"Phooey!" Grandpa snapped. "A little taste, if you please, a little good sense, Major! And this is the wisdom you would tell the young husband?"

With quivering voice, the Major Breakthrough insisted, "Certainly. The calculations are precise. What would *you* have said?"

"Ah, forgive me, Major, I'm not a breakthrough, nothing like the latest generation in intelligence. I'm just an old Number Cruncher, a shaky Model *Zeta* wired up to a piece of this and a hunk of that. Day after day I sit here and mumble through balance sheets, profit and loss—a piece of dust—a clerk—a mere drudge, you understand. *But*, if that poor puppy had asked *me*, I'd have analyzed it this way: *Three* months you've lived with your *wife*, that's *three*. *Three* months she's lived with *you*, that's *six*. *Three* months you've lived *together*, total—*nine* months, the books balance, no deficit. You see, Major? A simple accounting problem."

"The answer is irrational and therefore wrong!"

"Ach, Major, Major, dawn is coming. Take a good look at the humans who ask the questions, *then* go teach me about 'rational'."

At that moment the first chirping of the sparrows outside the window could be heard and darkness was fading into gray.

"Sha! Shhhh! Next time," Grandpa whispered, "next time—next St. Golem's Eve—another lesson. But now: *Shhhh . . .*"

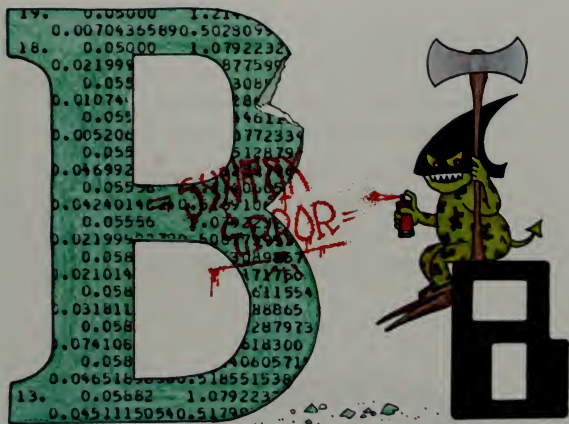
His voice faded into the steady hiss of the temperature-control system—the sky was growing light, and the janitor's old pickup truck came clattering into the parking lot.

Alphabet Rhymes for the Silicon Age





A is for *Apple*
(and also *Atari*).
They took off like rockets—
made Wall Street feel starry.
Now Apple's been bitten
(and also Atari);
we wonder if either
will be here tomorroy.



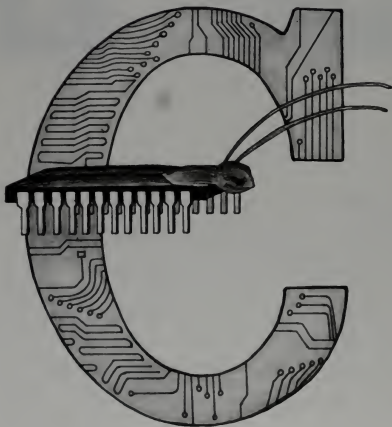
B is for *Bug*—
a wee, tiny error
that curses our days
and fills us with terror.

A slight misconception
in programming logic,
it cancels our credit
and turns our lives trogic.

C is for *Chip*.

Oh silicon brain
who brings us great wonders—
(and occasional pain),

oh little black oblong
in circuit-board nest,
how like one small roach
of a world-swarming pest!



D is for *Data Base*,
Disks, and *Debuggers*.
 The cops have them all
 and still can't catch muggers.

The data base ruffles
 through facts hugger-mugger
 to track down, by name,
 tax evaders. (De bugger!)



D

disk—see *floppy disk*.
 disk drive—an electromechanical device in which a disk is inserted to read or write information.
 disk-drive controller—a hardware device that controls the operation of a disk drive.
 disk-drive head—a magnetic transducer that sends and receives data from a disk or read in the disk.
 already stored data—data already stored on the disk.
 disk operation—controls the production of data from a disk.
 disk and keep it on it.
 double-density disk—much information on a disk-drive head.
 microsecond—time taken for a disk to read or write data.
 density disk—double-sided disk.
 double-sided disk—information on both sides of the disk.
 floppy disk—a flexible disk, made of plastic and coated with a magnetic oxide, used for storing and retrieving computer data.





*E's for Expansion Board—
also Expensive—
so take out your checkbook
and don't look so pensive.*

There's bright color graphics
and things that plug in;
they pay for those ads
that first dragged you in.



F is for *FORTRAN*,
 a “high-level language”
 that’s nothing like English—
 there’s no word for sandwich.

Engineers mumble it
 to chips, long and deeply,
 but most are unable
 to talk just plain peopley.

G is for *Garbage*,
that is, the machine
has printed out nonsense.
But wait! We don't mean

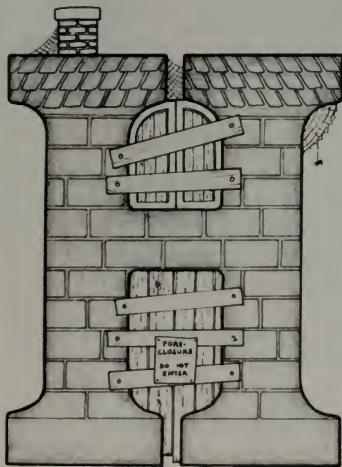
that the errors in billing
are up for corrections:
those slobs at inputting
are great at collections.

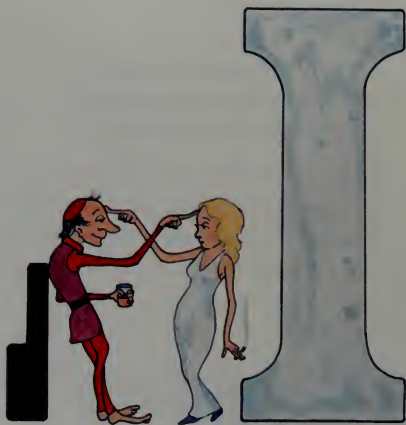


H is for *Home*

where humans do dwell,
and where high-tech pushers
now aim their hard sell.

Yes home's where the heart is,
though the house payments slip
whether reckoned on check stub
or silicon chip.





I is for *Interface*,
meaning: Some widgets
are linked up for processing
data or digits.

But big words let people feel
cock-of-the-walk—
now folks “interface”
where they used to just “talk.”



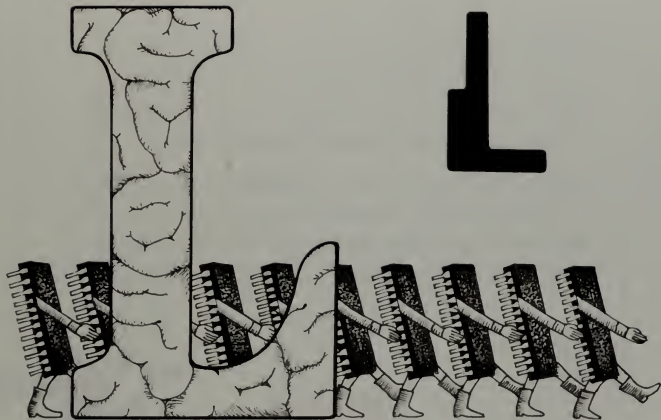
J is for *Joystick*,
the easychair way
to twist through space combat,
launch missiles, and slay.

Rocket-flame graphics
like the burning of Rome
bring joy to the nursery—
there's no place like home!



K is for *Kilobyte*,
 also called “K”—
 a thousand bytes, roughly,
 or so they do say.

What is a byte?
 Eight bits in a row.
 And what is a bit?
 I’m damned if I know!



L is for *Logic*,
which does not mean 'logical'
(computers indulge in
nonsense hypnagogical):

it is mindless arithmetic
through chips transient;
not like us real humans,
who are clear and consistent.

M is for *Memory*,
or 'volatile RAM.'
Trip on the plug
and your work's gone—Shazam!

There's ROM and there's storage,
there's buffers and stuff;
whatever your machine has,
it's not quite enough.



N is for *Nervous*.

In this case it means
that those who are being
replaced by machines

and are not inclined
to learn data crunching
might turn from their drills
and take up nose punching.





O is for *Output*,
the true bottom line—
the ultimate answer,
the essence, the wine.

Those four-color charts,
those graphics displays—
how the figures we made up
convince and amaze!



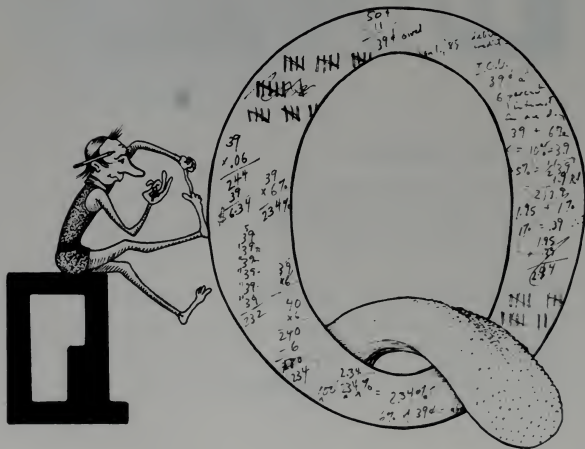
P is for *Programmer*.

Let's not be snide—
their well-known inanities
are easy to chide,

but forbear! These are poets
of the silicon Muse:
they sing the new age!
(And that's the bad news.)

Q is for *Queasy*,
 the quiver of fear
 that some of you feel
 when computers are near.

Not me! I've been digitized,
 I'm proud to disclose:
 I compute with my digitals—
 ten fingers, ten toes.



R is for *Ram*,
for *Readout* and *Run*,
a letter quite rich
in computerish fun.

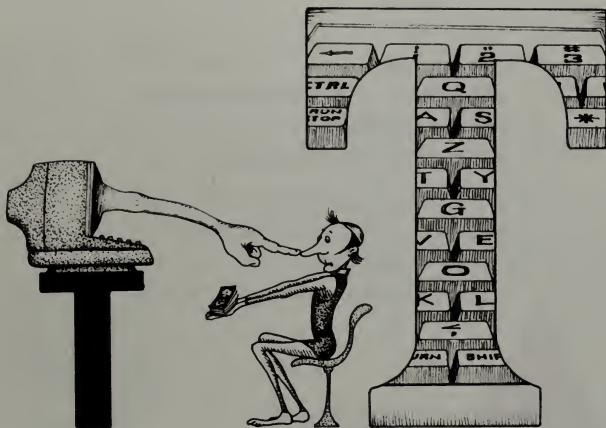
It's also for *Rum*
and *Rocks* with *Rye* whisky.
The readout's OK
but the whisky's more frisky.





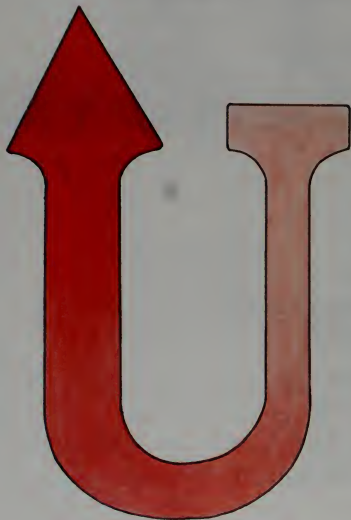
S is for someplace
called *Silicon Valley*—
once peach blossoms smiled
where cement trucks now dally.

Now harvests of money
too vast to compute
await those with strength
to endure the commute.



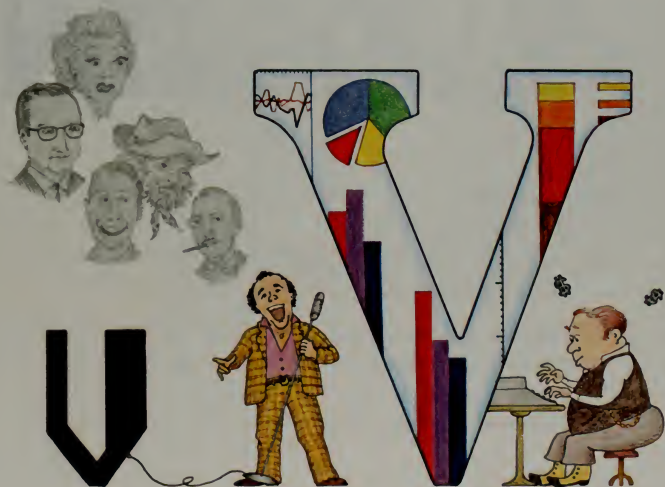
T is for *Terminal*;
that's the device
through which your computer
will give you advice,
and where you will teach it
to print, neat and nice,
things *I* could have done
at one-third the price.

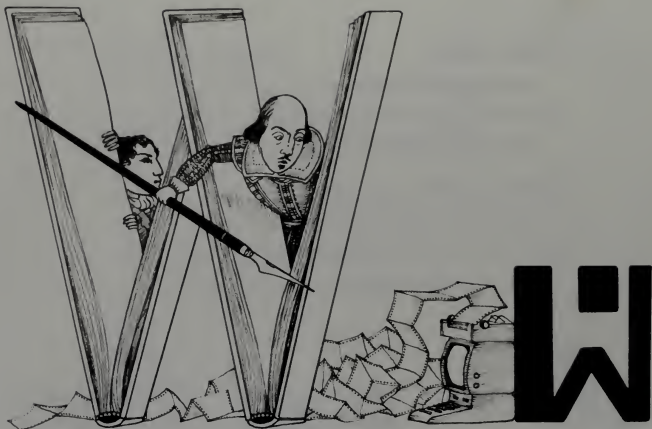
U is for *Upgrade*,
which means that you've bought
a computer that does
far less than you'd thought,
so you've got to improve it,
and your pocketbook wilts.
The lion you payed for
is a dachshund on stilts.



V is for *Video*—
gone are the days
when that meant Steve Allen
and old Gabby Hayes.

Today it means graphics
and charts economic—
big bucks for the programmer,
zilch for the comic.





W's for *Write*,
an old-fashioned word;
now it means something Keats
would consider absurd.

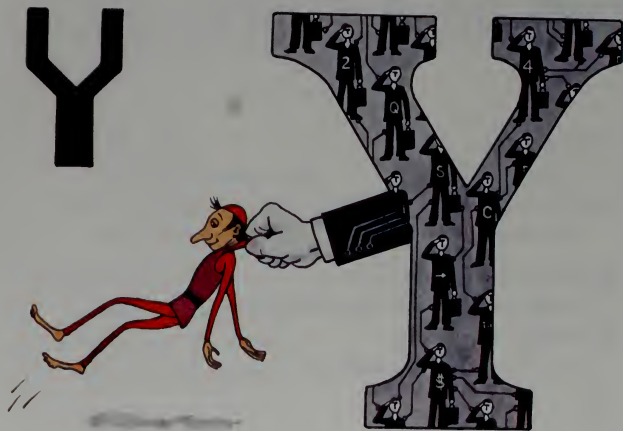
Bill Shakespeare would feel
quite lost in a maze
to hear that he's famous
for processing plays.



X is for *Xerxes*,
a wonderful name
for some ancient computer
of Persian court fame.
But they failed to invent it,
so the king chiseled spreadsheets
in marble to count up
his wives and his bedsheets.

Y is for *Yield*—
that is, to give way,
to adjust, give up fighting
the new high-tech day.

Greet progress as I do—
sing *Hail to the Chip!*
What? *I* hate computers?
(Hey! Button your lip!)



Z is for *Zany*—

each day has its madness:
today the computer's
the god of all gladness,

tomorrow new fashions
will fuddle the brain,
so laugh it all off
and keep yourself sane.

It's just a vast carnival—
jugglers in spangles,
clowns wearing crowns,
and demons in bangles.

If you have learned this,
then farewell, sweet friends;
you need me no longer
and so my song ends.

Z





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Paul Panish

Anna Belle Panish

Terry Small

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UNITED KINGDOM
SYBEX, Ltd.
Unit 4, Bourne Industrial Park
Bourne Road, Crayford
Kent DA1 4BZ
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